



INFORMATION NEWSLETTER

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Contacts	Judy Morphett	8298 5585
	Ian Morphett	8298 5585
	Sheila Graham	0415 256 131
	Mandy Coote	0401 540 024



Our October meeting

Dr Margarete Kleinig

Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau

We thank Dr Margarete Kleinig for stepping in at short notice when her colleague, Professor Melanie Oppenheimer was unable to present for us at the last meeting. Margarete gave a great talk on the Red Cross initiative – the Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau.

Just over a week after the start of World War I, a branch of the British Red Cross was established in Australia. Millions of pounds were raised in Britain and Australia by the Red Cross to enable them to offer services during the war. The Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau was one of those services.

In war time families often just lived with the unknown. Some servicemen just seemed to disappear, with official information not being available or not getting through to the families. The letters just stopped coming from loved ones, and their families were left wondering. Other times the families were advised of a death but had no other information.

This led to the establishment of the Australian WMEB in Cairo on the 21st Oct 1915 by Vera Deakin, daughter of former Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin. Offices of the Bureau were set up all over Australia. The Adelaide office was in the Verco Buildings, North Terrace. The office employed typists, but aside from that all of

the work was voluntary. Advertisements for the agency were placed beside the casualty lists in the newspapers

One of the volunteers who investigated the whereabouts of those missing in action was Stanley Addison. He was considered medically unfit to enlist in the armed forces, so instead he followed up enquiries about those missing in action. Wounded soldiers were often sent to places like Greece, Malta, and others to recuperate. If a soldier was not found among the wounded, there was still a good chance that information could be sought from them. Aside from eyewitness accounts the volunteers followed up on information about where the soldiers had been sent, what unit they belonged to, which battles they were in, and at least a dozen other details.

Margarete began her talk by telling of a letter that arrived at the Adelaide office on 22 Feb 1916, enquiring after one of Marion's own young men: Darcy Roberts of Sturt. His family had not received a letter for 5 months, but had not heard anything from the military. We were kept on edge until near the end when Margarete revealed that Darcy had been killed in action. While a sad thing for the family to learn of Darcy's death, it had to be better than being left wondering about it, and the details of his death were probably more merciful than the family may otherwise have imagined.

Margarete gave a very engaging talk about a truly humane service from an inspiring speaker.

From the Newspapers 100 Years Ago

Register (Adelaide, SA : 1901 - 1929),
Tuesday 25 December 1917, page 4

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CHRISTMAS DAY.

To-day is the birthday of Christianity. For the younger folk it is a day of gifts and revelry: older people regard the festival in a different light. This is the fourth celebration of the birth of the Great Peacemaker which has been observed beneath the darkening clouds of the greatest war since Christ was born, or of any other time. The domestic re-unions, which a few years ago formed so bright a feature of Christmastide, are now rendered more or less saddening by reason of the absence of thousands of men at the war. However, for the sake of those who cannot be present, the time-honoured ceremonies will not be forgotten, and, although physically absent, each man in the trenches will be spiritually present in his own family circle to-day. In Adelaide the event will be quietly observed. The weather on Monday night gave promise of continuing agreeable. Many hundreds of folk have left the city to spend the holidays in the country and at the seaside, and there have also been numerous travellers to the other States. The seaside resorts have attracted the usual large contingent of pleasure-seekers, and the heavy railway bookings to the southern coastal towns indicate that the popularity of these centres is rapidly increasing. This morning at 10.30 o'clock the Sunday School Union will conduct its customary Christmas service at the Town Hall, when the address will be delivered by the Rev. H. Howard. At night various theatres will provide appropriate programmes. On Wednesday (Boxing Day) the principal attraction will be the opening of the Port Adelaide Racing Club's meeting at Cheltenham. The event of the day will be the Christmas Handicap, and, granted favourable weather, the fixture should be a pronounced success. On the same day there will also be other sporting gatherings in the country, and the usual sources of entertainment will be available to the public. Holidaymaking has not abated this year, and already there has been a great demand for seats on trains and accommodation at watering places. The Railways Commissioner (Mr. J. McGuire) has arranged for a special Christmas service, and extra trains from Pinnaroo, Port Pirie, Broken Hill, and other districts are being run to bring country people into Adelaide. The

Director of the Tourist Bureau (Mr. Victor Ryan) intimated on Monday that a party of 50 people had left for the Mount Gambier district on a nine days' tour, returning to Adelaide on January 1. For the Christmas week all accommodation arranged for by the Bureau at Kangaroo Island and Port Lincoln had been filled, and the same condition applied to the River Murray boats.

News from the Marion Heritage Research Centre

With no more public events scheduled for this year, we have more time to help you with your heritage enquiries! Come and browse our newly catalogued City of Marion photo albums, full of pictures of council openings, people and events since the 1960s! Or let us help you with finding out about your house's history, by teaching you how to search SAILIS, the Land Titles' historical records, now available online for free!

For more information on the Heritage Research Centre please call on 7420 6455 or email heritage@marion.sa.gov.au

MHRC will close to the public for Christmas at 4pm on Wednesday 20th December and will re-open in the New Year at 10am on Monday 22nd January 2018.

Danielle and the Volunteers wish everyone a very happy Christmas and a peaceful and joyful new year.

Marion Historical Society

**Our next meeting will take place on
Wednesday 21st February 2017
7.30pm at Cooina**

Professor David Hilliard

“Early Methodism in South Australia”.



***Wishing you and those you love a
Merry Christmas and a Happy
and Healthy New Year***

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